

A New *Lerista* (Lacertilia: Scincidae) from Western Australia

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Abstract

A new skink, *Lerista simillima*, is described from the far north of Western Australia. It is a member of the *L. bipes* group and very close to *L. labialis*.

Introduction

A grant from Mr and Mrs W.H. Butler enabled the Museum to send two amateur herpetologists to the Kimberley Division in February 1984. Reptiles and amphibians were collected between Sandfire and Wyndham, especial attention being paid to fossorial snakes and lizards.

Among the latter were 45 members of the *Lerista bipes* group (Storr 1972), viz. two specimens of *L. ips* Storr, 1980 from 7 km E and 19 km NE Sandfire; 36 specimens of *L. griffini* Storr, 1982 from 1 km E and 10-12 km NE Kununurra, near Broome, 38 km ESE Broome and 13 km E Anna Plains; one specimen of *L. bipes* (Fischer, 1882) from 7 km E Sandfire; two specimens of *L. greeri* Storr, 1982 from 3 km SW Debesa; and four specimens of a new species which is now described.

Lerista simillima sp. nov.

Figure 1

Holotype

R87106 in the Western Australian Museum. Collected by G. Harold and D. Mead-Hunter on 4 February 1984 at 6 km WNW Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia, in 18°11'S, 125°31'E.

Paratypes

Kimberley Division (W.A.)

4 km SE Ellendale HS (R87094-6).

Diagnosis

A member of the *Lerista bipes* group with movable eyelids, two toes, no trace of forelimbs, two supraoculars and no supraciliaries; very like *L. labialis* Storr, 1972 but more slender, less reddish and having both supraoculars in contact with frontal, the second slightly larger than the first (in *L. labialis* the second supraocular is much the smaller and not in contact with frontal). Distinguishable from *L. greeri* and *L. bipes* by absence of supraciliaries, and from *L. griffini* by presence of a preocular and high (rather than low, flat) second loreal.

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Description

Snout-vent length (mm), 42-54. Length of appendages (% SVL): tail 86 (N 1); hindleg 16-19.

Nasals narrowly separated (N 2) or in point contact (2). Prefrontal fused to second loreal (as in *L. labialis*, *L. greeri* and *L. bipes*). Nuchals 2. Frontoparietals and interparietal fused. Supraoculars 2, both in contact with frontal, second slightly larger than first. No supraciliaries. Loreals 2, second high with acute apex. Preocular present. Temporals 3; upper secondary largest or subequal to primary, lower secondary much the smallest. Upper labials 6. Midbody scale rows 20 (N 3) or 21(1). Lamellae under longer toe 10.

Upper surfaces pale brown. Head sparsely to moderately spotted with dark brown. Back and tail with two paravertebral lines of small dark brown spots. Wide blackish-brown upper lateral stripe from nostril to end of tail. Ventral and lower lateral surfaces whitish.



Figure 1 A paratype of *Lerista simillima* from Ellendale, photographed in life by G. Harold.

Distribution

Only known from two localities in semi-arid south Kimberley; at both sites the soil is red sandy loam and the vegetation pindan. See Figure 2.

Derivation of Name

From Latin *simillimus* (very similar).



Figure 2 Map of Western Australia showing location of specimens of *Lerista simillima* (solid circles) and *L. labialis* (hollow circles).

References

- Storr, G.M. (1972). The genus *Lerista* (Lacertilia, Scincidae) in Western Australia. *J. Proc. R. Soc. West. Aust.* **54**: 59-75.
- Storr, G.M. (1980). A new *Lerista* and two new *Ctenotus* (Lacertilia: Scincidae) from Western Australia. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus.* **8**: 441-447.
- Storr, G.M. (1982). Four new *Lerista* (Lacertilia: Scincidae) from Western and South Australia. *Rec. West. Aust. Mus.* **10**: 1-9.